

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

*Rep Skelton*

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Office of Legislative Counsel

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29 APR 1977

Honorable Ike Skelton  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Skelton:

During our briefing of you on Soviet civil defense matters on 6 April, you asked for information on Soviet perceptions of the U.S. civil defense program. Enclosed please find an unclassified comment on that subject, which I hope will be of value to you.

You also asked about unclassified studies and sources on the general subject which you might be able to use as background for public statements. For this, I would direct your attention to U.S. Senate publication 94-268 dated 30 September 1976, entitled "U.S. and Soviet City Defense: Consideration for Congress."

We appreciated the opportunity to give you the briefing, and please let us know if we may assist you in the future.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

George L. Cary  
Legislative Counsel

Enclosure

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8 April 1977

MEMORANDUM

Soviet Perceptions of the US Civil Defense Program

1. Soviet propaganda intended for the general public or for foreign consumption presents the US civil defense program as well developed and extensive. This image serves two Soviet purposes: to convince the Soviet public that the activities required for Soviet civil defense are necessary; and to reinforce the message of American aggressiveness for domestic and foreign publics.

2. Soviet writings aimed at more sophisticated audiences perceive strengths and weaknesses in the US program. Perceived strengths include the evacuation capability inherent in the American road network and private automobile ownership. Perceived weaknesses include a low level of funding, inadequate numbers of shelters, and excessive concentration of defense industry in the Northeast. Soviet writers' perceptions of the United States are often distorted to support advocated policies, but in view of the Soviet leadership's general unfamiliarity with this country, these distortions tend to be accepted uncritically. Overall, the sophisticated Soviet writings on US civil defense suggest that at least some Soviet writers perceive a significant asymmetry between the US and Soviet civil defense programs.